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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN FROM SINGLE PARENT AND INTACT FAMILIES

BY

G. ALEXANDER MACDONALD

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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SUBMITTED BY G. ALEXANDER MACDONALD IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION.

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Date: February 1, 1991

Abstract

This paper reports findings of a study of the impact of family divorce/separation on children. Results are based on assessments of children's adjustment using the four factor scales of the Personality Inventory for Children (PIC); discipline/self-control, social competence, internalization/ somatic symptoms, and cognitive development. The sample included single parent and intact family children from rural Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.). Single parent children were found to have significantly more problems in the area of discipline/self-control than those from intact families. No other differences between the groups were found. Comparisons were also made within the sample of single parent children. Single parent females were found to have more difficulties in the area of discipline/self-control as compared to single parent males. No differences were found when children from families disrupted less than two years were compared to children whose families had been disrupted longer. The significance of these findings is discussed. Identified as important contributing variables are the cultural and community norms of rural P.E.I. and specific characteristics of rural single parents such as education and occupation levels, socio-economic status and parenting ability. Implications are that a child's reaction to divorce/separation must be viewed in terms of the family milieu, the immediate community and child him/herself. With this information, effective programs may be developed and carried out locally. Further research comparing the adjustment to divorce/separation of rural and urban children is warranted.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

One of the major demographic changes that has occurred over the past twenty years has been the rapid increase in single parent families. Since 1970, the number of children living with a lone parent of any legal marital status has increased strikingly. Guidubaldi, Perry and Cleminshaw (1985) report that in the United States (U.S.) between the years 1970 and 1981, the divorce rate doubled while the incidence of single parent child rearing increased from 11.9% to 20.1%. In addition, these statistics may be somewhat misleading as they do not account for those who were divorced and remarried, nor do they include the 23-30% of divorce petitions that are withdrawn where periodic separation and discord occur (Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985). As a function of this increase, it has been estimated that as many as 40% of current marriages in the U.S. will result in divorce (Long and Forehand, 1987).

Canadian children are also affected by the phenomenon. Wargon (1984) reports that since 1971, the number of single parent families in Canada has grown twice as quickly as that of intact families, that is, husband-wife families with or without never married children regardless of age. More specifically, in 1976 there were 599,330 single parent families in Canada, an increase of 17% over 1971 (Amber, 1980), while in 1981 the number had risen to 714,000, an increase of 49% in only 10 years (Wargon, 1984).

In the Atlantic provinces during the past 10 years, similar increases in the number of single parent families have been noted. In 1981 there were approximately 60,000 single parent families living in the area. By 1986 this number had increased by 24% to greater than 75,000 families, while the number of intact families had risen by less than 4% (Corbett, 1988). At the provincial level during this period, the number of single parent families on Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) increased by 10%, from 3,660 to greater than 4,000, and by over 15% in New Brunswick (N.B.), Nova Scotia (N.S.) and Newfoundland (Nfld.) (Corbett, 1988). At present, it is estimated there are over 4,000 single parent families on P.E.I. (Mazer, O'Bryan, Irving and Brazill, 1989).

This increase is a complex phenomenon which can be traced to a number of factors including shifts in social values as well as cultural and socioeconomic (SES) change. Perhaps of greatest importance is the increase in the divorce rate. Historically there has been a steady and gradual rise in the divorce rate through most of this century with fluctuations occurring periodically in response to wars and depression, the former usually causing an increase, the latter a decrease. However, there is no clear explanation for the dramatic increase in the divorce rate over the last 20 years. A marked increase in the number of women in the labour force, society's greater tolerance of divorce and separation and even the ready

availability of contraceptives have been identified as contributing factors (Shamsie, 1985). Especially important are legislative changes which have resulted in the passage of the Divorce Act of 1968 and the recent introduction of No Fault Divorce Legislation. The former greatly increased the legal grounds for divorce and was followed by a dramatic increase in divorces, while the latter was intended to simplify the process and reduce costs. What seems clear is that divorce is now perceived by many as an option to marital and family related problems. It appears the view of marriage as a divine institution ended only by the death of one's spouse has been replaced by a more efficacious notion that judges the validity of marriage in relation to marital harmony and happiness.

Considering the magnitude of this change and the historical importance of the nuclear family structure as the basis for socialization of children, it is surprising that so little has been done to provide empirical evidence of the impact on children. Recently, this has become an area of primary concern for a variety of professionals in psychology and education. The difficulty in attempting to determine the effect of family disruption on children and adolescents is that the independent subject variables such as cause and length of parental absence, sex of custodial parent, and socioeconomic status (SES) of the family, are naturally entangled with many conditions known to influence child

development such as age and gender. It is important, then, that any research study dealing with this subject be carefully designed.

The Problem

The early identification and assessment of children and adolescents with special needs is a major concern of schools and clinics. Within these institutions, professional staff are often called upon to assess individuals and aid in the planning of remedial programs. Professionals in these applied settings report maladaptive child behaviours appear disproportionately among children from single parent families (Guidubaldi, Perry and Cleminshaw, 1985), yet as noted, little has been done to provide reliable evidence of the impact of family disruption.

Although numerous studies have compared children from single parent and intact families (Wallerstein, 1984; Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985; Hetherington, 1989), the results have been contradictory and generated much debate. It is only recently that the results of well-designed longitudinal studies have been made public. These results indicate that children from single parent families generally perform less well than intact family children on a wide variety of academic, social, and physical health measures (Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985; Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1985). Further, important differences among single parent children have been found which indicate that response to family disruption may be age and sex dependent (Wallerstein, 1984; Guidubaldi and

Perry, 1985; Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1985). This information is important for several reasons. It may be used to identify which children are most influenced by family disruption and how they are affected, and to inform parents, teachers and other helping professionals about the relationship between family disruption and associated child problem behaviours. Such information may also be used to help professionals prevent the development of long-term mental health disorders which have been found to result from family disruption (Wallerstein, 1984), and assist them in designing sensitive and effective programs. Nevertheless, it has not been determined whether the results of this longitudinal research, the vast majority of which has been carried out in the urban U.S. and Canada, hold true for children residing in rural areas.

Hopefully the current research will help determine if the findings of other studies can be replicated using a sample which includes children from rural P.E.I. The purpose of this project is to examine personality characteristics of school aged children from this area. This project will assess whether differences exist among children from single parent families and between children from single parent and intact families. The study is designed to answer two main questions: (1) Do children from single parent families in rural P.E.I. behave adversely as a result of family disruption? and (2) What form do these behaviours take?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Perhaps the greatest concern regarding the impact of family divorce and separation on our society is its effect on children. For many years child care professionals have suggested that there is a high incidence of maladaptive behaviour in children from single parent homes (Long and Forehand, 1987). Although the incidence of research regarding the impact of family disruption on children has accelerated dramatically since 1970, the quality of much of the research lacks empirical rigor (Santrock and Madison, 1985). To date, most studies confirm that divorce and separation appear to be associated with a wide variety of negative child behaviours. Some studies, however, have reported that family divorce/separation have no effect or even a positive effect on child adjustment.

Two approaches to the study of children from single parent families have typically been employed. The first, referred to as the clinical tradition is characterized by heterogenous, often small samples that usually do not include a control group of non-divorced individuals. Detailed information is obtained about children and parents through clinical interaction and interviews. Rarely are demographic variables controlled. The clinical approach usually is based

on many hours of face-to-face interaction with subjects during which time detailed information is obtained. Secondly, the quasi-experimental tradition includes homogeneous samples of small to moderate size, and often employs a control group of children from intact families carefully matched to the single parent group. In most instances, one or more demographic variables are investigated or controlled, and multi-method approach to data collection is often employed. This approach may include behaviourial observation, standardized tests, child and parent interviews and trait ratings. Statistical analysis is usually a strong feature of this tradition.

Clinical Tradition

The prototypical investigation of the effects of family divorce on children in the clinical tradition, is the well-known work of Judith Wallerstein and Joan Kelly (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974). The study was originally designed to observe and record the impact of divorce on children and their families at the time of the divorce decision, and again approximately one year thereafter. Beginning in 1971, Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) explored the experience of 60 families whose 131 children were between 2 1/2 and 18 years of age at the time of family break-up. Subjects were recruited through announcements for free preventative counselling for families considering divorce. The participants were interviewed prior to family disruption, immediately after, and 18 months later. Information was obtained from clinical

interviews, direct observation, teacher reports, and school records. Initial results indicated that children's response to family disruption was age dependent. Children 3 - 5 years of age were very aggressive and displayed emotional need; those 6 - 8 exhibited fear and felt deprived; individuals 9 - 12 were very angry and exhibited some somatic concerns; while those 13 - 18 years of age at break-up were often withdrawn and had difficulty coping (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Eighteen months after the initial assessment they found that almost half of the children who were pre-school age at the time of family disruption showed many more behaviourial difficulties than at first observation. Also, pre-school boys whose psychological adjustment at the time of the marital rupture was similar to that of pre-school girls, were more troubled at school, playground and home than the girls at the 18 month mark, whereas many of the girls appeared recovered (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Five years later, results indicated that most of the negative behaviours had disappeared. Wallerstein was dismayed, however, to discover that over one-third of the original sample, all of whom were drawn from non-clinical populations not originally identified as needing psychological help, suffered from moderate to severe depression. The study concluded that a strong father-child relationship is linked to high self-esteem and absence of depression in children of both sexes and all ages (Wallerstein, 1984).

Ten years after the initial interviews, data on the three groups of original participants were presented. Those 9 - 18 years of age at the time of family separation reported that the divorce of their parents years ago still had a lasting effect on their lives. Many of these young adults sensed that the divorce of their parents burdened their efforts at growing up, and showed considerable concern about repeating the divorce in their own marriages (Wallerstein, 1984). Those 6 - 8 years of age at marital rupture reported that anxieties about relationships with the opposite sex, marriage, and personal commitments were quite extreme. A common concern was fear of betrayal in relationships, both present and future. Fifty percent of the males and 25% of the females were considered poorly adjusted (Wallerstein, 1987). Those 2 1/2 - 6 years of age at the time of the initial interviews reported retaining few conscious memories of the intact family or of the separation and divorce, although they had been the group most severely troubled at initial investigation. It was also reported that a heightened need to establish relationships with absent fathers appears to occur as these youngsters, especially the females, reached adolescence (Wallerstein, 1984). The study concluded that a strong possibility exists that children who are very young at the time of family divorce and separation are considerably less burdened in the long term than those who are older (Wallerstein, 1984).

The work of Lawrence Kurdek and his associates (Kurdek and Siesky, 1979; Kurdek, 1981; Kurdek, Blisk and Siesky, 1981; Kurdek and Berg, 1983), much of it of a clinical design, has also contributed greatly to our understanding of the effects of family disruptions on children. Kurdek and Siesky (1979) interviewed 74 divorced parents about their children's reactions to, and present attitudes towards, the break-up of the family. They explored the degree to which the parents' responses to questions about their divorce varied as a function of age and sex of the children, sex of the custodial parent, and length of separation. They found that younger children seemed to experience greater difficulty in both accepting the permanence of the divorce decision, and giving up hope for parental reconciliation (Kurdek and Siesky, 1979).

Kurdek, Blisk and Siesky (1981) also attempted to identify the nature of children's long-term adjustment to divorce and separation. Fifty-eight white middle class children age 8 through 17 years were assessed at 4, and then 6 years after family disruption. At the initial interviews, most of the children understood the divorce in a way that revealed few major problems, but showed a lack of awareness regarding the problematic interpersonal dynamics of their parents' relationship. Two years later, the study found that children's feelings had remained stable. They concluded that children who were well adjusted were those who were older, not recently separated, with an internal locus of control and a

high level of interpersonal reasoning (Kurdek, Blisk and Siesky, 1981).

In an attempt to provide an overview of children's divorce adjustment, Kurdek (1981) examined cultural, social, familial, and individual factors. For both clinical and non-clinical samples, developmental status was found to be consistently related to both type and severity of children's divorce adjustment. He concluded that a child who seeks help is like to tap a variety of resources, whereas a child who does not seek help is apt to be psychologically stranded (Kurdek, 1981).

Further, Kurdek and Berg (1983) attempted to assess developmental trends and sex differences, and examine a variety of social, familial and psychological correlates. They interrelated a variety of mother, child and teacher measures of children's divorce adjustment. They found that children's adjustment was positively related to an internal locus of control and a high level of interpersonal understanding, and significantly related to the custodial parent's use of social support systems. As well, older children were better adjusted than younger children, and females were better adjusted than males (Kurdek and Berg, 1983).

In a related study, Neal (1983) attempted to provide a cognitive complement to the findings of Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) by describing the ways in which children in various age

groups make sense of their parent's divorce. He felt age differences in children's reactions to divorce would parallel the ages associated with the emergence of the different Piagetian stage of cognitive development. Forty-four children between the ages of 3 and 15 years whose parents had separated with the previous 18 months were interviewed between 4 - 6 times. Results indicated that children responded to divorce in an age dependent manner. The older the child at the time of family disruption, the more able the youngster at distinguishing hidden emotions of parents, and attributing a change in these emotions as a major cause of divorce (Neal, 1983).

Similarly, Kalter and Rembar (1981) attempted to examine more closely the role a child's age plays in mediating the effects of family divorce. Evaluations of 144 children who had experienced parental divorce and had been seen at a university clinic were assessed. The children were divided into four sub-groups by crossing two age levels, latency (7 - 11 1/2 years) and adolescence (12 - 17 1/2 years), with sex of the children. The study found subjective psychological problems, academic problems, and intense anger towards parents were exhibited by many children. Perhaps the most important finding was that marital rupture very early in a child's life, at 2 1/2 years or younger, was associated with separation-related difficulties during latency for males and females alike. Further, divorce during the pre-school phase (3 - 5

years) was linked to a inhibition of aggression in adolescent males, and problematic aggression combined with academic problems for adolescent females (Kalter and Rembar, 1981).

Lastly, Copeland (1985) attempted to highlight individual differences based on gender in children's reaction to divorce. In her study she interviewed 108 children and their mothers concerning aspects of their daily life, the causes and effects of the separation, and their perception of their own and others' reactions. No main effects for gender were found. The study concluded that there are various post-divorce patterns of reactions which differ among boys and girls, and which represent relative degrees of problems with a normal range (Copeland, 1985).

In summary, the results of the studies reviewed indicate strongly that age and developmental status play a major role in children's divorce adjustment. Several researchers (Kurdek and Siesky, 1979; Kurdek et al, 1981; Kurdek and Berg, 1983; Neal, 1983; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974, 1980), found that, in the short term, children who were preschool age at the time of family disruption were more adversely affected than older children. Yet, Wallerstein and Kelly (1984, 1987) found that, over the long term, the negative behaviours exhibited by these preschoolers disappeared, while those children older at the time of family disruption developed significant psychological problems.

Locus of control (Kurdek et al, 1981; Kurdek and Berg,

1983) and interpersonal reasoning skills (Kurdek, 1981; Kurdek et al, 1981; Kurdek and Berg, 1983) were also found to be important in mediating a child's response to divorce and separation. With regard to the role of gender, however, contradictory results were obtained. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), Kurdek et al (1981), Kurdek and Berg (1983), and Wallerstein (1987) observed that females responded more favourably to divorce than did males in both the short and long term. Wallerstein (1984) and Kalter and Rembar (1985) found the opposite to be true, while Copeland (1981) found no difference between the sexes.

Among the methodological problems that are encountered in the clinical research tradition are the lack of a control group of non-clinical children, a failure to control for or investigate demographic variables, restricted samples, and poor indices of child adjustment (Santrock and Madison, 1985). These shortcomings are evident in much of this body of research and are such that the generalizability of these results are open to question. Nevertheless, the strengths of the clinical tradition lie in the detailed and extensive examination of parent's and children's lives. Rich knowledge is obtained about parent's and children's feelings, and their reaction to divorce and separation. Further, this clinical datum not only provides a developmental analysis of how children of different ages may encounter a variety of difficulties as a result of family disruption, but furnishes

information regarding the long-term effects of this phenomenon as subjects look back on their childhood and adolescence.

Quasi-experimental studies

For the past twenty-five years, researchers using a quasi-experimental design have been attempting to better understand the single parent family. The results of initial research efforts were contradictory. Some research findings indicated that little relationship existed between parental marital status and children's academic performance or behaviour. Kelly, North and Zingle (1965) reported data on the influence of family structure on several school related variables. They found that when socioeconomic variables were controlled, family disruption did not have a deleterious effect upon children's reading achievement, nor did they find differences in school behaviour between children from intact and single parent families. Atkinson and Ogston (1974) compared 70 children on broad measures of child behaviour in the home and school. They reported that children from single parent families performed as well academically, participated in as many activities and were equally cooperative and responsible as their intact family peers. Similarly, Fowler and Richards (1978) assessed the academic achievement of 60 black children several times over a two year period. They found no differences between single parent and intact family children on reading, mathematics and language arts achievement.

In contrast, other studies showed that children from single parent families do differ from children in intact families. Blanchard and Biller (1971) examined several groups of males from single parent and intact families. They found that males with a single parent were generally underachieving and functioning below grade level. However, males from intact families with low father availability functioned below grade level, while those with high father availability performed consistently above grade level. The authors concluded that father absence or father unavailability can interfere with academic performance. In a similar study, Santrock (1972) compared 3rd and 6th grade children's I.Q. and achievement scores. Results indicated that children from single parent families scored lower in 3rd grade achievement, and that children whose parents separated during the first two years of life obtained lower I.Q. and achievement scores than children whose parents separated later in life. As well, males from single parent families scored lower on I.Q. and achievement scores than females. Finally, Sciara (1975) compared the achievement test scores of over one thousand children. Results indicated that children from intact families attained higher reading and arithmetic scores than children from single parent homes.

The contradictory results of these studies serve to illustrate the difficulty in attempting to determine the effect of family disruption on children and adolescents. Many

of these early studies were criticized because of methodological problems including the failure to control for socioeconomic status (Shinn, 1978), and for the use of restrictive sampling techniques and/or psychometrically unsound indices of child psychopathology (Blechman, 1982). In spite of these flaws, the early quasi-experimental research provided a wealth of descriptive information about single parent families which subsequently became the basis on which further studies were planned.

Since 1980, researchers have continued to use the quasi-experimental design while attempting to avoid the methodological pitfalls encountered by other studies. Although they have examined the impact of family structure on dependent variables as diverse as academic performance, behaviour, and self-concept, the results have been again somewhat contradictory. Influenced by the studies of Hammond (1979) and Brown (1980) indicating that single parent children have significantly more problems than their peers from intact families in the areas of school achievement, discipline, absenteeism, suspension and learning problems, Hett (1983a) examined a sample of children from each group matched for grade and sex. Parents and teachers were interviewed while the children completed a series of educational and psychological measures. Results from the study indicated that children from single parent families exhibit more school related problem behaviours than do children from intact

families. In an attempt to replicate these findings using a larger sample, Hett (1983b) collected data on 1,241 children living in single parent (152), intact (1,035) and other (54) family arrangements. The teacher of each child rated him/her on each of the dependent variables. Differences between the groups were found in the areas of school achievement and discipline, and on a variety of other school related variables such as absenteeism, attention skills and somatic concerns.

Similarly, Kurdek and Sinclair (1988) assessed how family structure, gender and family environment were related to academic performance and school behaviour. Subjects included over two hundred 8th grade children. The authors found that intact family students had higher end of year grades than those from single parent and stepfather families. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, the academic performance of children with stepfathers was lower than that of intact family children, while the performance of single parent males was indistinguishable from single parent females. In a related study, Meuller and Cooper (1986) surveyed over one thousand subjects between the ages of 19 and 34 years of age. They compared single parent and intact family subjects on educational, occupational and economic attainment, and in marriage and parenthood, and sought to determine if differences between the groups could be attributed to economic factors. They found that when socioeconomic status was controlled, males and females from single parent families

received lower family incomes, greater welfare assistance, were more likely to be separated or divorced and less likely to be married than their intact family peers. As well, single parent females were found to have lower occupational status than intact family females.

In an effort to see whether children from single parent families have more discipline problems than other children, Goldstein (1984) examined over six thousand adolescents (12 - 17 years) from single parent and intact families. Information on student's behaviour problems was gathered from schools, parents, and the children. The mediating effect of parental supervision of the children's activities was also investigated. Sex of the child and amount of parental supervision were found to be important. Single parent males were more likely to have had police contact than other children, while those from low supervision families showed a greater likelihood of school discipline problems and police contact than other groups. Also, children from low income single parent families were more likely to require school discipline than children from low income intact families. In another study, Stolberg and Anker (1984) compared groups of single parent and intact family children on a number of variables including a behaviour checklist, change measures, and a cognitive/perceptual characteristics measure. Lower levels of pro-social school-related behaviours and higher levels of inappropriate interpersonal and unusual behaviour

patterns were noted in the single parent group. Further, the younger the child at family disruption, the more negative and disorganized his/her perception of stimuli such as mother, father, self, home, family and marriage.

Finally, Slater, Stewart and Linn (1983) investigated the possible effects of separation and divorce on the formation of adolescent's self-image. Over two hundred adolescents completed questionnaires which provided insight into each subject's background, psychological composition and perception of his/her family. Results indicated that females from disrupted homes reported higher levels of conflict within the family environment than females from intact families. The opposite held true for males. As well, intact family females had a more positive self-concept than single parent females, while single parent males had a more positive self-concept than those from intact families. In a related study, Meijer and Himmelfarb (1984) compared adolescents from single parent families' perception of their mother with that of adolescents from intact families. Over five hundred high school students were interviewed. Results indicated that fatherless adolescent females perceived their mothers as being less benevolent than did adolescent females from intact families. In contrast, Raschke and Raschke (1979) collected data from a sample of 289 3rd, 6th and 8th grade students in order to investigate the relationship between family structure, family conflict, and children's self-concept. They found that family

structure had no significant impact on children's self-concept and concluded that children are not adversely affected by living in a single parent family.

Although the results of these "one-shot" studies seem to indicate that living in a single parent family may have an adverse effect on learning, behaviour and self-concept, the evidence is far from conclusive. Perhaps the greatest understanding of children's adjustment to family disruption comes from quasi-experimental research of longitudinal design. Two studies of this nature have contributed significantly to our understanding of this phenomenon.

Longitudinal Research

Building on the results of an earlier study (Hetherington 1972) which indicated that father absence had an adverse effect on the personality development of females, Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1978) investigated the impact of divorce on families, and on the development of children in the two years following family disruption. The original sample consisted of 72 white, middle-class children and their divorced parents from homes in which custody had been granted to the mother, and the same number of children from intact families. The children were matched for age, sex, birth order, and nursery school attendance, and for parent's age, education and length of marriage. Assessment devices included parent interviews, structured diary records, laboratory and home observation of parent-child interaction, observation of

child-teacher and child-peer interaction in school, checklists and ratings of children's behaviour by parents and teachers, personality tests, and parent self-report scales. Datum were collected at 2 months, 1 year, and 2 years following separation.

Initial findings indicated that children from single parent compared to children from intact families displayed higher levels of dependent, disobedient, aggressive, demanding, unaffectionate and whining behaviours. As well, these children were more anxious, hostile, emotionally distressed, and less happy than the children from the comparison group. At the one-year follow-up the members of the divorced families exhibited more disrupted psychological and social functioning and emotional distress than they had at the initial interview. The results of the two-year follow-up indicated that, for most of the single parent children, especially the females, the problems had disappeared. However, even after a two year interval, males from single parent families were more anxious and aggressive, less happy, and exhibited poorer school behaviour than intact family children (Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1982).

Six years after the initial interviews, Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1985) assessed 124 of the original 144 families. A new group of families was added in order to expand the size of the sample to 30 females and 30 males in each of 3 groups: a remarried/step-father group, a mother-custody non-remarried

group, and a non-divorced group. The additional subjects were matched with the original subjects for family size, age, education, income, length of marriage, and, where appropriate, length of time since divorce, and time of remarriage. Measures of child adjustment included parent rating scales, teacher rating scales, peer nominations, child self-rating scales, school observations, behaviour checklists, and a life experience survey. Results indicated that females in families with a divorced non-married mother were very similar in adjustment to females in non-divorced families. By comparison, 6 years after divorce, males in the divorced non-remarried group showed more externalizing and internalizing behaviour and less social competence as reported by sons, mothers, teachers and peers than males in non-divorced families. The authors concluded that, in general, divorce has more adverse long-term effects on males, while remarriage of a custodial mother is associated with an increase in behaviour problems in females, and some decrease in problems in males (Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1985). In a related article, Hetherington (1989) reported that at the six year follow-up, one cluster of children, of which 75% were male, were lonely, unhappy, anxious, and insecure. For example, 70% of this group did not have a close friend. She went on to note that a salient characteristic in the background of children who did not seem to be negatively affected by divorce over time, was contact with a caring adult whether a parent, other relative,

teacher or neighbour. Further, it was found that females who were well adjusted had assumed responsibility at a young age for the care of others.

Unfortunately, Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1978, 1982, 1985) employed a sample which was unrepresentative on both economic and geographic criteria. Such a shortcoming may raise questions as to both the reliability and the validity of the findings and the degree to which conclusions may be drawn. Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, and McLoughlin (1983) attempted to provide more definite answers regarding the impact of family disruption and the role played by such variables as sex, age, and social class. They felt the methodological weaknesses encountered by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1985) could be avoided by using improved sampling techniques, a carefully selected control group, and multi-factored assessments by highly trained evaluators. One hundred forty-four school psychologists in 38 states, all of whom were members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in the U.S., participated in a longitudinal study involving a random sample of 341 divorced children and 358 children from intact families (Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, and McLoughlin, 1983). Each of the evaluators selected six elementary school-aged children: two 1st graders, two 2nd graders, and two 5th graders. One child from each grade level lived with both parents, while the other lived with a single parent. In addition to psychometric

measures, assessment devices included teacher rating, parent satisfaction scales, and child and parent interviews. Data collected from school records included grades, attendance, standardized group test scores, and special services provided to the child. The authors felt this multi-source approach was necessary to provide internal validity checks and increase confidence in findings, to provide opportunity to examine the complex interactions among environmental conditions that typically have been neglected in previous research, and to parallel legally mandated multi-factored assessment procedures employed by psychologists in schools. Results showed that family disruption accounted for several negative behaviours. Differences were observed between intact and single parent groups on social-emotional, academic and intellectual criteria. Intact family children performed better on 14 of 16 classroom behaviour ratings, and on communication, daily living and social scales. They were absent less frequently, had higher peer popularity according to both parent and teacher ratings, and demonstrated more internal locus on control, and higher full scale I.Q. and Wide Range Achievement Tests (W.R.A.T.) reading and spelling scores. As well, intact family children were more likely to have higher school grades in reading and math, and less likely to repeat a school grade, than children from single parent families.

With I.Q. scores (WISC-R) controlled, differences between the two groups were also found. Children from intact families

performed better in 15 of 16 classroom behaviour ratings, and on teacher ratings of competence in communication and social interaction, had higher WRAT subtest scores, school grades in reading and math, and teacher/parent ratings of peer popularity, and were less absent and less likely to have repeated a school grade than did children from single parent families. When family income was controlled, similar results were found. Intact family children performed better on 11 of 16 ratings of classroom behaviour, had higher I.Q. scores, and greater teacher and parent ratings of peer popularity. Also, when parental educational level was controlled, intact family children scored higher on 15 of 16 classroom behaviour ratings, and on social and communication scales. Further, they were less likely to repeat a school grade, had higher grades in reading and math, had better WRAT reading and spelling scores, were absent from school less often, and had better peer relations as judged by parents and teachers. Finally, with occupational level of the parents controlled, differences were revealed in favour of intact families on 14 of 16 classroom behaviour rating scales, social, communication, and daily living scales, absence frequency, peer popularity, WRAT reading and spelling scores, grades in math and reading, and regular versus special class placement.

Differences were also found among children from single parent families. One of the most powerfully demonstrated findings was that females exhibited better adjustment than

males. Females performed better on 11 of 16 classroom behaviour rating scales, in peer popularity, school grades in reading and math, classroom conduct, WRAT reading, spelling and math scores, and were less likely to have repeated a grade. Most of the differences persisted when comparisons were made with I.Q. and family income controlled. Since females generally perform better than males at these age levels, point-biserial correlational analysis of marital status and criteria were performed separately for males and females. Results showed small but significant relationships between marital status and a wide array of criteria for males but not for females. Intact family males performed better than single parent males of 11 of 16 classroom behaviour ratings, school absence rate, measures of peer popularity, had higher grades in reading and math, and were less likely to have repeated a school grade. On these criteria, the only difference between the two groups of females was on the classroom behaviour scale of independent learning.

A second finding was that reaction to family disruption depended on the child's age. First grade students showed fewer adverse effects than 5th grade students. Differences were found among the three age groups on six classroom behaviour scales, four social competency measures, parent's adjustment ratings, WRAT math scores, level of locus of control, and regular versus special class placement. On 11 of these variables, younger children demonstrated better

adjustment than 5th grade children, while the latter had better scores in only four measures. Similar results were found when analyses of covariance were performed, controlling for I.Q. and family income. Guidubaldi, Perry, and Cleminshaw (1985) report the major finding of the 1983 study to be the consistent pattern of sex differences in children's divorce-related adjustment relative to the findings of Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1985) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980). They found that single parent males in comparison to single parent females and children in intact families have a behaviour profile that indicates high frequencies of negative acting out including aggression, opposition and impulsivity, and concluded that males react to the stress of divorce and separation with aggression while females compensate through prosocial behaviour.

Guidubaldi and Perry (1985) provided results from a two year longitudinal examination of the original sample (Guidubaldi et al, (1983) which focused on selected mental health criteria. A group of 110 children whose family status had remained unchanged over this interval was selected. Data gathering instruments included parent interviews, psychologists rating forms, child interviews, the Achenback Parent and Teacher Rating Scales, the WRAT, the Hahnemann Elementary School Behaviour Rating Scale, and a locus of control scale. As in the earlier study, they found differences between single parent and intact family children

on various mental health criteria. Results indicated that children from single parent families performed more poorly on 9 of 30 mental health measures. They showed higher frequencies of dependency, irrelevant talk, withdrawal, blaming, and inattention on the Hahnemann Scale, and decreased work effort and higher frequencies of inappropriate behaviour, unhappiness, and maladaptive symptoms on the Achenback Scale. Similar to the initial study, males from single parent homes displayed poorer performances than intact family males on 6 of 30 mental health measures while no differences in the same 30 criteria were found for females. When family income or I.Q. were controlled, males in single parent households repeatedly displayed less appropriate behaviour, less work effort and happiness, and more behaviour problems than their intact family peers; few differences were found for females. In a related study, Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, Nastasi, and Lightel (1986) attempted to identify home environment factors that contribute to healthy child development within the divorced family by comparing datum from the 1983 and 1985 studies. They identified such factors as style of child-reading, frequency of parent visitation, conflict between parents, and consistent home routines as being important and conclude that females from single parent families performed more similarly to intact family females as they progress through elementary grades, while males from both groups show an increasing number of differences. In conclusion, the

findings of these studies suggest that children from single parent families are adversely affected as a result of family disruption. The results seem to indicate that these children not only perform more poorly than intact family children on a variety of cognitive, behaviourial and emotional measures, but also show within group differences based on gender and age which seem independent of well-defined socio-economic measures including income and educational and/or occupational level of parents. Generally, it seems that males respond more negatively to family disruption than do females, while younger children respond more favourably than do older children.

It appears the results of these well-designed studies (Guidubaldi et al, 1983; Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985; Guidubaldi et al, 1986) are supported by the findings of other research efforts. A consistent result coming out of the quasi-experimental research is that single parent children differ from those from intact families on a variety of behaviourial, academic and economic variables. There is also strong evidence that differences exist among children from single parent families. Many studies, most notably those of Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979, 1982, 1985), Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), Guidubaldi et al (1983), and Guidubaldi and Perry (1985), report that females respond more favourably than do males to the stress of family divorce/separation in both the short and long term. More specifically, it appears that there is little difference between males and females in their

initial reaction to family disruption, but that over time major differences develop. Further, the results of the research consistently indicate that age and developmental status play a major role in children's divorce adjustment. There seems to be a period of time immediately following divorce/separation which is quite stressful for children of all ages. Following this, children who were preschool age at the time of divorce seem to develop more positive behaviours when compared to children who were older.

Although these findings seem to provide strong evidence that many children are adversely affected by divorce/separation, it is clear that a number are not. The results of the clinical research, while providing a wealth of information regarding children's divorce adjustment, indicate that all children do not respond similarly to the stresses of family disruption. Further, although the results of the quasi-experimental research indicate that differences exist between single parent and intact family children, there is evidence that much of the research is inconclusive or methodologically flawed. Consequently, it appears that the generalizability of these results to all children is open to question. Therefore, it seems clear that if programs are to be developed which will help children deal effectively with the stresses of divorce/separation, further research is needed. More specifically, if such a program is to be developed locally, it should first be determined if the major

findings of these studies can be replicated. To further this goal, several broad questions have been generated. It is hoped that the answers to these will help clarify the role of independent subject variables such as family structure, length of parental absence, and gender, in children's adjustment to family disruption. These questions are manifested in the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis #1

Children from single parent families will score higher on each of the four factor scales of the Personality Inventory for Children than children from intact families

Hypothesis #2

Children from families that have been disrupted for less than two years will score higher on the four factor scales of the Personality Inventory for Children than children whose families have been disrupted for more than two years.

Hypothesis #3

Males from single parent families will score higher on the four factor scales of the Personality Inventory for Children than females from single parent families.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In Chapter 3 the procedures used to conduct this study will be described. Firstly, the method of sample selection and a description of the population from which participants were drawn will be provided. Secondly the type of research design will be discussed followed by an account of the manner in which it was applied. Thirdly, the Personality Inventory for Children (PIC) will be described and an analysis of its psychometric properties will be presented. Finally, the method of data analysis will be reported.

Sample

Subjects for this study were drawn from the elementary school population of a rural school district situated in the eastern section of Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.). This district, one of the five on P.E.I., has a total of 16 elementary schools, each serving grades 6 to 9 and with a total population of approximately 3,000 students. The school enrollments range from 75 to more than 400 students.

The majority of the population of this rural area resides in one small town, two small villages, and numerous tiny communities. The economy is seasonal in nature and is based on farming, fishing and tourism. The manager of the local Canada Employment Centre reports that the unemployment rate during the winter months is approximately 50%.

With the permission of the superintendent of education, each of the elementary school principals was contacted by the researcher in an effort to determine their willingness to participate in the study. Ten of the sixteen principals indicated that they wished to participate. This resulted in a list of 102 children from the participating schools who had indicated on the student registration form completed in September of 1988 that they were living with a lone parent of any legal marital status. As a further check, at the time the list was compiled, each principal ensured that the student's family structure was consistent with that on the registration form. A randomly selected group of children from intact families from the same grade was also provided. The parent(s) of each child were contacted by mail and invited to participate. Seventy-two of the intact families and fifty-seven of the single parent families replied. Due to some interim loss, the sample eventually ended up consisting of 66 children (32 males, 34 females), between the ages of 6 to 16 years from intact families, and 47 children (27 males, 20 females) aged 5 to 15 years from single parent families. Of the latter group, 42 lived with the mother, while 5 resided with the father. Even though the sample appears small, it seems representative of the total population. Although not randomly selected, as was the control group, the single parent sample represented over forty-five percent of all single parent children in 10 of 16 elementary school children in this

school district.

Design

This study employed a causal comparative research design which is used to discover the causes of behaviour patterns by comparing individuals in whom these patterns are present with those in whom these patterns are absent or present to a lesser degree. The major advantage of this method is that it enables researchers to investigate the relationship between many variables in a single study. In the present study, this ex post facto research design is used to examine the relationship between family structure, behaviour, social skills and cognitive ability.

The parent(s) of each of the children were mailed a letter of transmittal, a shortened version (Part I - 131 items) of the Personality Inventory for Children (PIC) questionnaire and answer sheet, a short marital status questionnaire, and a return envelope. The letter of transmittal emphasized the voluntary and confidential nature of the study while the marital status questionnaire was designed to provide information regarding the nature of the family structure and the sex and grade of the child involved. All participants received a phone call five to six days after the mailing date inviting their return of all materials.

Instrumentation

Historically, children's personality measures have been based on such procedures as projective techniques, parent

interview, and behaviourial observation (Klinedinst, 1975). Recent efforts to develop a carefully constructed psychometric instrument for use in the study of child and adolescent personality have resulted in the Personality Inventory for Children (PIC), an instrument which attempts to provide a comprehensive personality description for children and adolescents ranging in age from 3 to 16 years (Wirt, Lachar, Klinedinst, and Seat, 1984). This instrument has been recognized as a valuable research tool ready for widespread use (Reynolds, 1984), and has been described by Tuma (1984) as a psychometrically sound instrument for assessing children.

The PIC is a 600 item inventory in which parent's response to true and false questions are converted from raw scores to T-scores. Wirt and Broen (1958) initially wrote 550 test items; 50 for each of 11 content scales which included Withdrawal, Excitement, Reality Distortion, Aggression, Somatic Concern, Anxiety, Social Development, Family Relations, Physical Development, Intellectual Development, and Asocial Behaviour. Fifty items were later added to strengthen sampling in several areas. The personality dimensions and inventory items were selected on the basis of empirical and rational methodologies, rather than being derived from a particular theory of personality (Wirt, Lachar, Klinedinst, and Seat, 1984).

Normative data from the PIC were collected over a four year period (1958 - 1962) from a sample including 2,390

children from the Minneapolis public school system with 100 females and 100 males representing each age level from 5 1/2 to 16 1/2 years. Lachar (1984) recently published a revised version of the PIC which retained all 600 original inventory items, but presented them in such a way to improve clinical and research use. Each item has been placed in one of four sections of the inventory; completion of each successive section increases the number of factor, clinical and research scales that are available for interpretation. Completion of the first 131 items of the PIC provides a measure of informant defensiveness (Lie scale). In addition, data are provided on four broad-band factor derived scales that reflect the major content dimensions of the PIC item pool. The Lie scale was constructed to identify an informant's defensive response set. Elevation on this scale increases when the respondent intentionally attempts to portray the child as having fewer problems than is actually the case. As well, for each factor scale, a higher T-score elevation represents an increased probability of psychopathology or deficit. It is on these factor scales that children from single parent and intact families were compared. They are described below:

Factor I - Undisciplined/Poor Self-Control: This factor measures a child's behaviour and ability to conform to limits. Children scoring above the average range may exhibit a disregard for rules and societal expectation, and display behaviours ranging from impulsivity and distractibility to

temper outbursts and argumentativeness.

Factor II - Social Incompetence: This factor attempts to analyze children's social skills and determine whether they suffer rejection from peers. Children scoring above the average range may be described as shy, withdrawn, afraid of many things or socially isolated.

Factor III- Internalization/Somatic Symptoms: This scale assesses a child's self-concept and worry over physical well-being. Children with high scores may exhibit fatigue, unrealistic fears, crying spells and sleep disturbance.

Factor IV - Cognitive Development: This factor determines the presence of age-appropriate academic achievement. Children having difficulty in this area may manifest significant academic difficulty and exhibit problems in the areas of concentration and attention.

Factor Scale Reliability

Alpha coefficients of internal consistency were calculated for the four factor scales in the PIC protocols of 1,226 children and adolescents evaluated at the Lafayette Clinic in Detroit, Michigan. Each of the individuals had been assessed for behaviourial and emotional adjustment problems. The resulting values were, I: Undisciplined/Poor Self Control = .92; II: Social Incompetence = .89; III: Internalization/Somatic Symptoms = .82; IV: Cognitive Development = .81 (Lachar, 1982).

Lachar (1982) also presented statistics on the stability

of the factors which were calculated from both clinical and normal samples. The clinical sample of 22 males and 12 females (age 5 years to 14 years) was re-evaluated 4 to 72 days later; a normal sample of 25 males and 21 females (aged 4 years to 16 years) was reassessed 13 to 102 days later, and another normal sample of 34 males and 21 females (aged 5 to 11 years) was assessed 14 days after completion of their first protocol. With 10 of the 12 test-retest correlations for the 4 factor scales falling between .82 and .97, the following mean stability coefficients were obtained: I = .91; II = .91; III = .90 and IV = .82 (Lachar, 1982).

Keenan and Lachar (1988) evaluated the psychometric characteristics of the PIC as a screening device for use with preschool populations. Thirty-one mothers completed Parts I and II of the PIC (280) items twice. The average time between testings was two weeks. The following coefficients of stability for the Factor Scales were obtained: I = .89; II = .90; III = .77 and IV = .92

Factor Scale Validity

Initially, in order to examine the validity of the Factor Scales (Part I) of the PIC, protocols from six homogenous samples of problem children previously applied to the development of empirically derived scales, were scored for each of the factor scales. The goal of the study was to determine if the scales would differentiate among the criterion samples in a meaningful and predictable manner.

Groups studies included: 151 adolescent delinquents; 80 adolescents displaying characteristics associated with hyperkinetic syndrome; 73 who had received a diagnosis of cerebral dysfunction; 35 somatizing males; 138 retarded children; and 79 psychotic children. Each factor scale was found to significantly differentiate groups in a meaningful manner that would be expected based upon group characteristics (Lachar, 1982).

Lachar, Gdowski and Snyder (1984) sought to expand the construct validity of the Factor Scales of the PIC by examining their relationship to empirically derived dimensions of problem behaviours in children and adolescents. The sample consisted of more than 600 children and adolescents. Criterion checklists for each participant were completed by a parent, teacher and clinician. The four factor scales predicted 14 different generalized external dimensions. Correlates for Factor I (Undiscipline/Poor Self-Control) included hostility, antisocial behaviour and impulsivity; for Factor II (Social Incompetence) correlates included developmental delay and social withdrawal; those for Factor III (Internalization/Somatic Symptoms) included depression and somatic symptoms while some of the Factor IV (Cognitive Development) correlates were academic delay, developmental delay, and cognitive/attentional deficit.

Using the sample described in the previous study, Lachar (1982) attempted to assess the predictive validity of each

Factor Scale by examining the relationship between scale elevation and external child descriptors obtained from parents, educators, and clinicians. The individual items from these sources were correlated with each Factor Scale for the total clinical sample. Results indicate that the practice of limiting clinical significance to elevations in excess of T-scores of 69 is generally accurate for the four Factor Scales, although a few correlates first become descriptive in the 60 - 69 T-score range. Further, Keenan and Lachar (1988) examined the relationship between the PIC Factor Scales and teacher ratings of children's behaviour as measured on the School Behaviour Checklist (S.B.C.). Factor I was found to correlate significantly with school disturbance and aggression, Factor II with anxiety, hostile isolation, and total disability, Factor III with hostile isolation and Factor IV with school disturbance, low need achievement and total disability.

Finally, DeKrey and Ehly (1985) attempted to determine whether Parts I and II of the PIC comprise a relevant instrument for the assessment of educational handicaps in school age children. The combined discriminative ability of the 12 shortened clinical scales and the four factor scales were assessed for four educational classifications. The sample included 95 male elementary school-aged children from regular, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed and mentally handicapped classes. A parent of each child completed Parts I and II of the PIC and scores were analyzed in an attempt to

differentiate among the three groups of special education students and the control group of average students. A discriminant analysis was conducted and the results of the classification phase indicated that 90% of the cases were correctly classified through the use of the shortened PIC.

Together, the results of these studies provide strong support for the convergent and discriminant validity of the Factor Scales of the PIC.

Data Analysis

Individual raw scores were first transformed into standard T-scores. Descriptive statistics, which included means and standard derivations, were then generated for the comparison groups on each of the factor scales. Descriptive analyses of the number of subjects and percentage of the total group scoring within certain T-score ranges were carried out. To determine if differences existed between the comparison groups, tests of statistical significance were then performed. As the direction of the group differences on each variable was predicted in advance based on previous research, and as a total of 12 comparisons were being made, a univariate rather than a multi-variate approach was employed. This decreased the risk of committing a Type I error, that is, rejecting the null hypothesis when it is correct. A students' T-Test for Independent Groups, a robust measure which is relatively insensitive to violations of its underlying mathematical assumptions, was performed for each hypothesis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the data analysis will be presented as they relate to the hypothesis posed in Chapter II.

Hypothesis #1

In order to determine whether children from single parent families scored higher on the 4 factor scales of the PIC than intact family children, a student's T-test for Independent Groups was performed on each of the factor scales.

Results of the analysis on Factor I (Undisciplined/Poor Self Control) indicated that the mean T-score of the single parent group (55.51) was significantly higher than the mean score of the intact family children (48.23).

The separate variance T-value was 2.96 with a 1-tail probability of .002 (see Table 1). Further investigation showed that of the 66 children from intact families, 4% had T-scores on Factor I greater than 70 which indicates that parents and teachers are likely to find these children's behaviour problematic. Of the 47 children from single parent families, 17% had T-scores on Factor I greater than 70.

The results of the analyses on Factors II, III and IV indicated that there were small non-significant differences between the two groups. The single parent group scored slightly higher, on average, on Factors II, III, while the comparison group scored marginally higher on Factor IV (See Tables 2, 3 and 4).

Table 1

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of Single Parent and Intact Family Subjects on PIC Factor I

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	1-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	1-Tail Prob.
Fac.1												
Single	47	55.5106	14.763	2.153	2.31	0.002	3.16	111	0.002	2.96	73.73	0.004
Intact	66	48.2273	9.706	1.195								

Table 2

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of Single Parent and Intact Family Subjects on PIC Factor II

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.2												
Single	47	52.1277	9.706	1.416	1.12	0.674	0.51	111	0.611	0.51	95.80	0.614
Intact	66	51.2121	9.184	1.131								

Table 3

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of Single Parent and Intact Family Subjects on PIC Factor III

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Pooled Variance Estimate Degree of Freedom	Pooled Variance Estimate 2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Separate Variance Estimate Degree of Freedom	Separate Variance Estimate 2-Tail Prob.
Fac.3												
Single	47	55.7872	11.327	1.652	1.25	0.422	0.33	111	0.740	0.34	105.36	0.735
Intact	66	55.0152	12.681	1.561								

Table 4

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of Single Parent and Intact Family Subjects on PIC Factor IV

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.4												
Single	47	47.7234	8.048	1.174	1.62	0.088	-0.39	111	0.696	-0.41	109.84	0.685
Intact	66	48.4242	10.228	1.259								

Further, little difference was found between the two groups regarding the number of children receiving T-scores greater than 70. On Factor II (Social Incompetence), 3% of the intact family children and 4% of the single parent group received * T-scores in this range; on Factor III (Internalization/Somatic Symptoms), 12% of the former group and 11% of the latter obtained T-scores greater than 70 while on Factor IV (Cognitive Development), 3% of children from intact families and 0% from single parent families received T-scores as high. On the Lie scale, which identifies the presence of a defensive response set, the mean T-score of each group fell well within the average range indicating a consistent and truthful response to the PIC. However, the difference between the means was significant at the .05 level, evidence of a higher tendency among intact family parents to respond in a defensive manner. (See Table 5).

Hypotheses I, that children from single parent families would score significantly higher on the factor scales of the PIC as compared to children from intact families, was partially supported. The former group scored higher on Factor I, but not on Factors II, III and IV.

Hypotheses #2

In order to determine whether children from families disrupted less than two years (n=11) obtained significantly greater T-scores on the four PIC factor scales as compared to children whose families were disrupted for more than two years

(n= 32), student's T-tests for Independent Groups were again used to analyze average T-score differences.

On Factor I, no significant differences were found between the two groups as a T-value of 1.684 was needed to achieve significance at the .05 level (see Table 6). It would seem, however, that the mean T-score of children from families disrupted less than two years is somewhat, but not significantly higher, than that of children from families disrupted more than two years. With regard to Factor III, similar results were obtained. Although no significant differences were found between the two groups, the mean T-score of children from families disrupted less than two years was somewhat, but not significantly higher, than that of children from families disrupted more than two years (see Table 8).

Further, of children from families separated less than two years, 36% received T-scores greater than 70 on Factor I while 27% did so on Factor III; of the children from families separated more than two years, 12% obtained T-scores greater than 70 on Factor I while 6% did so on Factor III.

On Factors II and IV, both groups obtained similar T-scores, with the children from families disrupted less than two years scoring slightly higher than the comparison group (See Tables 7 and 9). Again, a comparison of average T-scores on the Lie scale showed each group's score fell within normal limits indicating truthful consistent reporting on the part of

the respondents. Hypotheses #2 was not supported.

Hypotheses #3

To determine if single parent males (n = 27) received significantly higher T-scores on all four PIC factor scales, as compared to females with a single parent (n = 20), a student's T-Test for Independent Groups was performed on each of the factor scales.

The analysis on Factor I provided little support for the hypotheses (See Table 10). Surprisingly, high negative T-scores resulted which indicated that single parent females received significantly higher T-scores on Factor I than single parent males. The females mean T-score on this factor (60.10) was very similar to that of all single parent children whose families had been disrupted for less than two years (60.00). As well, 6 of 20 females received T-scores of greater than 70 while 2 of 27 males received T-scores as great.

On Factors II, III, and IV, single parent females received, on average, slightly higher T-scores than males. However, these differences were not significant (see Table 11, 12, 13).

The average T-scores on both groups on the Lie scale were virtually identical (males = 49.96, females = 49.95); as these fell within normal limits, truthful and consistent reporting by the respondents was indicated. Hypotheses #3 was not supported.

In summary, Hypotheses #1, that children from disrupted

families will score higher on the PIC Factor Scales than intact family children, was only partly supported with the former group scoring higher on Factor I, but not on Factors II, III, and IV. Hypotheses #2, that children from families disrupted for less than 2 years would score higher on the factor scales than those from families disrupted for more than 2 years, was rejected. Hypotheses #3, which stated that males from disrupted families would score higher on the PIC Factor Scales as compared than females was also rejected.

The results of the study seem to indicate that significant differences do exist between children in single parent and intact families in the areas of discipline and self-control. As well, contrary to the findings of a good deal of previous research, females from single parent families would seem to show more difficulties in this area than do males.

Table 5

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of Single Parent and Intact Family Subjects on PIC Lie Scale

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Lie												
Single	47	49.9574	9.067	1.323	1.35	0.284	-2.28	111	0.025	-2.34	106.99	0.021
Intact	66	54.2879	10.538	1.297								

Table 6

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of children from families disrupted less than two years with those disrupted more than two years on Factor I

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.1												
<2 years	11	60.0000	16.062	4.843	1.16	0.713	1.08	41	0.286	1.04	16.37	0.312
>2 years	32	54.2500	14.945	2.642								

Table 7

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of children from families disrupted less than two years with those disrupted more than two years on Factor II

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.2												
<2 years	11	53.1818	5.964	1.798	3.24	0.054	0.14	41	0.393	0.18	31.91	0.861
>2 years	32	52.7188	10.735	1.898								

Table 8

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of children from families disrupted less than two years with those disrupted more than two years on PIC Factor III

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.3												
<2 years	11	60.5485	13.486	4.066	1.61	0.303	1.63	41	0.111	1.45	14.53	0.164
>2 years	32	54.0625	10.644	1.882								

Table 9

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of children from families disrupted less than two years with those disrupted more than two years on PIC Factor IV

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.4												
<2 years	11	50.6364	9.584	2.890	1.81	0.199	0.99	41	0.327	0.86	13.99	0.406
>2 years	32	47.9375	7.116	1.258								

Table 10

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of

Males and Females from disrupted families

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.1												
Male	27	52.11	11.106	2.137	2.60	0.025	-1.88	45	0.033	-1.76	29.62	0.044
Female	20	60.10	17.897	4.002								

Table 11

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of

Males and Females from disrupted families on Factor II

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.2												
Males	27	51.4444	11.315	2.178	2.49	0.044	-0.56	45	0.581	-0.59	44.09	0.556
Females	20	53.0500	7.163	1.602								

Table 12

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of

Males and Females from disrupted families on Factor III

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.3												
Males	27	54.4815	12.816	2.467	2.05	0.111	-0.92	45	0.364	-0.97	44.88	0.339
Females	20	57.5500	8.953	2.002								

Table 13

Results of student's T-test comparing mean T-scores of

Males and Females from disrupted families on Factor IV

Variable	Number of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	F Value	2-Tail Prob.	Pooled Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Separate Variance Estimate T Value	Degree of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
Fac.4												
Males	27	47.4444	7.255	1.396	1.61	0.260	-0.27	45	0.786	-0.26	35.11	0.793
Females	20	48.1000	9.193	2.056								

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary objective of this research project was to examine personality characteristics of children from intact and single parent families. More specifically, children and adolescents from these groups were compared on the four factor scales of the PIC, while comparisons were also made between several groups within the sample of children from single parent families. In Chapter V, a discussion of the results reported in Chapter IV will be presented along with their implications. As well, suggestions for further research efforts in this area will be given.

Discussion

Perhaps the most important finding of this study is that single parent and intact family children differ in some predicted areas but not in others. The results provide partial support for the hypotheses that children from the former group are adversely affected as a result of their family structure. Significant profound differences were found between these children and those from the comparison group in the areas of behaviour and self-discipline. These findings are supported by much of the research. Further support is provided by the fact that 8 of 47 (17%) single parent children received T-scores greater than 70 in the area of behaviour/discipline which would indicate that

parents/teachers would find their behaviour problematic, while only 3 of 66 (4.5%) intact family children scored as highly. In the areas of social competence, internalization and cognitive development, however, both groups of children showed very similar performances. These results are inconsistent with much of the research where significant differences have been found between single parent and intact family children on a wide variety of cognitive, behaviourial, and emotional criteria (Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1982; Hett, 1983b; Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, and McLoughlin, 1987).

A reason for this inconsistency may be the dependent variable employed in this study. The PIC examines a wide range of personality characteristics, which, by virtue of factor analyses, fall into one of four behaviourial areas. In several studies, most notably the well-designed work of Guidubaldi and his associates, a much more comprehensive analysis was used. For example, Guidubaldi and Perfy (1985) employed 30 mental health measures when examining children from single parent and intact families. The finding that the two groups differed on 9 of these variables may indicate that a wide range of specific behaviours must be employed as dependent variables if differences are to be found. It may also be that as much of the previous research is methodologically flawed, that the generalizability of the results to all populations is open to question, which would explain the discrepancy between these findings and those of

other studies. A third explanation may be that the complex interaction between individual subject characteristics and the dynamics of divorce and separation makes the design of studies and the replication of results extremely difficult.

However, the discrepancy between these results and those of other studies may be best attributed to the uniqueness of the sample employed. The sample was intended to be representative of the population of children from single parent and intact families on rural P.E.I. Research indicates that, on P.E.I., single parent families in general, and rural single parent families in particular, differ from intact families in a variety of areas aside from family structure. Mazer et al (1989) reports that approximately 30% of all single parent families on P.E.I. are on Welfare assistance and that 63% of the kids on welfare assistance in the province live with a single parent. Corbett (1988) reports that, on P.E.I., 80% of mother-led families and 55% of father-led families have incomes of less than $10,000 per year, while the vast majority of all these families pay in excess of 34% of their income on rent. Further, the results of a recent survey of 126 single mothers on P.E.I. indicate that over 90% live below the poverty line (Arsenault, Jay and Niquette, 1989). As well, these single parents have very high levels of illiteracy, and partly as a consequence, very low levels of education and work experience. These problems are compounded if the single parent family resides in a rural area. Fewer

human or financial resources, limited housing and daycare, and limited access to education are often related to living in a rural community. Many of the single parent families on P.E.I. report the majority of their problems stem from a substantially lower family income as compared to intact families, and indicate they have major problems parenting children alone (Mazer et al, 1989). Others indicated the most important services they could be offered would be child care, financial help and transportation (Arsenault et al, 1989). If single parents in rural areas are at a greater disadvantage than those in urban areas, it may be that the single parents in this study are primarily concerned with children's behaviour and discipline, rather than their cognitive development, social incompetence, and internalization. Also, the parents' lack of education and work experience, and in many cases their feelings of rejection and lowered self-esteem resulting from family disruption, contribute to this response.

Findings inconsistent with the results of many other studies were obtained when several groups within the single parent sample were examined. It was expected that children from families disrupted less than two years would manifest greater difficulties than those from families disrupted longer, results consistent with those of Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1982; Wallerstein 1984; and Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985. Although no significant differences were found in the areas of discipline/behaviour, 4 of 11 in the former group obtained T-

scores of greater than 70, while 4 of 32 did so in the latter group. With regard to internalization/somatic symptoms, 3 of 11 in the former group as compared to 2 of 32 in the latter group obtained T-scores as great. For practical purposes, it would appear that many more children from families disrupted less than two years would be referred to a counsellor/ psychologist, than from the comparison group. Results also indicate these groups did not differ in the areas of social incompetence or cognitive development. That no significant differences between the groups were found in these four areas may be a reflection of a small number of individuals represented from families disrupted for less than two years. Again, it may also be due to the nature of the single parent group in this study. Much of the research indicates that in disrupted families many parents are unable to separate their children's needs from their own and that family members undergo an initial period of emotional distress and disrupted functioning which seems to last 2 - 3 years. However, Wallerstein (1989) reports that in many families, the diminished parenting continues and disrupts the child rearing functions of the family, especially if the divorce is compounded by continued stress and adversity. (Hetherington, 1989). If, as noted, single parent families in rural P.E.I. encounter a great deal of adversity and stress and have very limited contact with professionals such as social workers, counsellors and clergy, (Arsenault, Jay and Niquette, 1989)

these results many indicate that children from these families suffer adversely in both the short and long term.

An examination of the males and females from the single parent sample also produced surprising results. Females manifested significantly higher T-scores in the areas of discipline and self-control, and consistently higher scores in the areas of social incompetence, internalization/somatic symptoms, and cognitive development than did males. On Fact I, 6 of 20 females obtained T-scores greater than 70, while only 2 of 27 males did so. One of the clearest findings of previous research is that single parent females consistently display better adjustment than males (Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1982; Guidubaldi et al, 1983; Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985; Hetherington et al, 1985; Wallerstein, 1987). There are other studies, nevertheless, whose results are not consistent with these findings. Slater et al (1983) reported that single parent adolescent females showed higher levels of conflict within the family environment and lower levels of self-concept than females from intact homes, while the opposite held true for males. Further, Meijer and Himmelfarb (1984) found that fatherless adolescent girls perceive their mothers as being less benevolent than adolescent females from intact families. It is more likely, though, that the discrepancy between the findings of this study and much of the previous research is a reflection of the rural area in which the study was carried out. In this area, young males encountering difficulty in

school often opt for short-term employment in the farming, fishing and tourism industries; opportunities which are not as plentiful for young females. This creates greater opportunity for conflict between single parents and their daughters, as many young males spend a great deal of time outside the home. This hypotheses is consistent with the findings of Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) who reported that many single parent males spend significantly less time in the home with parents or other adults than single parent females. As well, in these communities, difficulties in the areas of discipline/self-control may seem more appropriate for males and easily accounted for by the absence of a father, while these behaviours in females may be seen as problematic.

In summation, the major finding of this research is that single parent children in rural P.E.I. seem to react to the stresses of family separation and divorce in a manner inconsistent with that described in much of the previous research. More specifically, single parent children from rural areas differ from their intact family peers in the areas of discipline/self-control, but not in the areas of social incompetence, internalization or cognitive development. Of equal importance is the fact that a close examination of the single parent group of children again produced findings inconsistent with much of the previous research. Little difference was found between children from families disrupted less than two years, as compared to those from families

disrupted longer. As well, males were not found to be more adversely affected by separation and divorce than females, in fact, the opposite was found to be true. These findings may be explained, in part, by the educational and emotional and behaviourial characteristics of the sample employed, and by the socio-economic status, and the societal and cultural norms of the area from which the sample was drawn. As noted, the purpose of this research was to examine a sample of children from rural P.E.I. Therefore, a major delimitation of this study is that the generalizability of these findings is open to question.

Implications

It seems the major implication of this study is that, because of the complex nature of this area of research, the generalizability of any research results may be open to question. It appears that a child's reaction to divorce/separation must be viewed in terms of the family milieu, the immediate community, and the emotional, behaviourial and cognitive characteristics of the child. If programs are to be developed which will deal effectively and sensitively with children suffering adverse effects as a result of family disruption, these factors must be taken into consideration. As well, parents, teachers and others involved in the helping professions must be educated as to the possible effects of family disruption and associated child problem behaviours.

A second major implication of this study is that the results seem to indicate that females in single parent rural families show behaviours distinct from those of their single parent and intact family peers. It may be that this research has identified a group of children who are high risk for the development of behaviourial/emotional problems in both the short and long term. This is important to schools and other helping agencies which may target these children as high risk and intervene before problems develop and/or become full blown. As well, this information may be used to assist advocacy groups in instituting changes which will assist these single parents in breaking out of the cycle of poverty, unemployment and despair.

There are also implications for further research. It is important to determine if these results can be replicated using a larger sample of children from rural areas. It would also be important to examine the sample of children along with a large sample of children from urban areas. Of value would be a carefully designed longitudinal study which would involve rural and urban children and investigate the roles of such variables as child's gender and parent's income and occupational level in children's divorce adjustment. This would provide information regarding the role of independent subject variables and length of parental absence which would aid in the development of effective programs.

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